

## CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM.

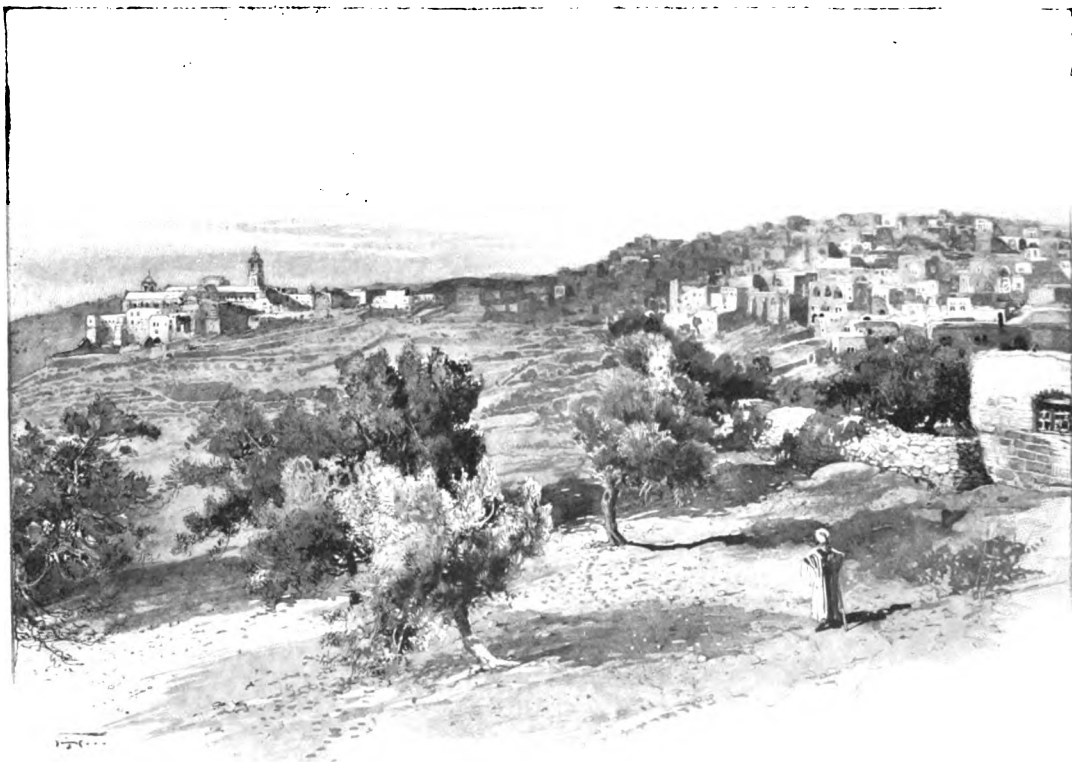
BY EDWIN S. WALLACE.

DURING the Christmas season, when the thoughts of the civilized world turn to Bethlehem, many will wonder how the people there keep this greatest religious holiday. Very few American children can ever visit the little city among the Judean hills. Yet a number of travelers from America and Europe come to the Holy Land every year, and possibly some ST. NICHOLAS readers may be among those who on this Christmas day will crowd the streets

place of Jesus, it is the birthplace of Israel's great warrior-king, David.

Bethlehem to-day has barely eight thousand inhabitants, and in appearance is not attractive. The streets are too narrow for vehicles; in fact, there is but one street in the town wide enough for carriages, and it is so very narrow that they cannot pass each other in it. The streets were made for foot travelers, donkeys, and camels.

Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jeru-



VIEW OF BETHLEHEM. THE BUILDING ON THE LEFT IS THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

of the little city nestled among its fig-trees and olive-orchards.

It is a little city, and it does not take many people to crowd it; but, besides being the birth-

place of Jesus, it is the birthplace of Israel's great warrior-king, David. Bethlehem to-day has barely eight thousand inhabitants, and in appearance is not attractive. The streets are too narrow for vehicles; in fact, there is but one street in the town wide enough for carriages, and it is so very narrow that they cannot pass each other in it. The streets were made for foot travelers, donkeys, and camels. Bethlehem is about five miles south of Jeru-



A NEARER VIEW OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

affairs. The horses are to be pitied, first, because they are not well cared for, and second, because their drivers are regular Jehus who drive them "furiously" up hill and down. In less than an hour we are in the marketplace of Bethlehem, in front of the Church of the Nativity.

Let us suppose we have arrived on Christmas eve, in time to wander about and to become acquainted with the little city.

Of course it has changed in appearance since the time of the birth of Christ. It is larger, and better built. Now, as then, the houses are of stone, and, as cities and customs change but little in the East, we may safely infer that modern Bethlehem houses are much like those of nineteen hundred years ago. Perhaps some of the old buildings that were in existence so long ago may still be standing. Of course the great Church of the Nativity was not then erected, nor were any of the large religious buildings we

see. These are the memorials of a later date, built in honor of Him whose earthly life began here. One would have to be unmindful of his surroundings and very unimaginative not to wonder what the place was like on that night the anniversary of which we are celebrating.

We know that then, as on this December 24, it was filled with people. But those people had come for a different purpose. Augustus Cæsar, the master of the then known world, had issued an imperial decree ordering a general registration of all his subjects. This was for the purpose of revising or completing the tax-lists. According to Roman law, people were to register in their own cities—that is, the city in which they lived, or to which their village or town was attached. According to Jewish methods they would register by tribes, families, and the houses of their fathers. Joseph and Mary were Jews, and conformed to the Jewish custom. It



A THRONG OF PILGRIMS ENTERING BETHLEHEM ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

was well known that he and Mary were of the tribe of Judah and family of David, and that Bethlehem was their ancestral home. Accordingly, they left the Nazareth home, in the territory of Zebulun, and came to David's "own city," in the territory of Judah.

They came down the east bank of the Jordan, crossed the river at Jericho, and came up among the Judean hills and valleys till they reached Bethlehem. It was a long journey, and a wearisome one; and, on arriving, a place of rest was the first thing sought. Evidently they had no friends living in the place; or, if they had, their houses were already filled. It was necessary that shelter be had, and immediately. In the khan, or inn, there was no room; so there was nothing to do but occupy a part of the space provided for cattle. It was not an unusual thing to do, and is often done to-day in these Eastern villages. In fact, they were about as comfortable there as in any khan. At a khan one may procure a cup of coffee and a place to

lie down on the floor; but each guest provides his own bed and covering. This was all Joseph and Mary could have obtained in the inn, had there been room for them. And here in Bethlehem, in a stable, or a cave used for stabling animals, Jesus was born, and Mary "wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger."

There is one short walk we should take before entering the Church of the Nativity and the cave beneath it. This is to the "Field of the Shepherds," about a mile east of the church, and the traditional place where the shepherds were watching their flocks on that momentous night. This may not be the exact place where the angels appeared, but there is no reason why we may not accept the tradition which has placed the event here. It has often been wondered why the shepherds had their flocks out all night in the winter time; and the wonder is easily satisfied when we know that these were not ordinary flocks of sheep nor ordinary shep-

herds. These flocks were those specially selected for sacrifice in the Temple at Jerusalem, at the great Passover season, and were kept in the fields all the year. The shepherds were specially appointed.

Some time during that winter night the shepherds were dazzled by a light more brilliant than the stars, and roused by voices not of earth. The Christ, whose future sacrifice their flocks were to symbolize, was born; and the angels were singing the good tidings. These shepherds were the first to hear and to spread the marvelous news.

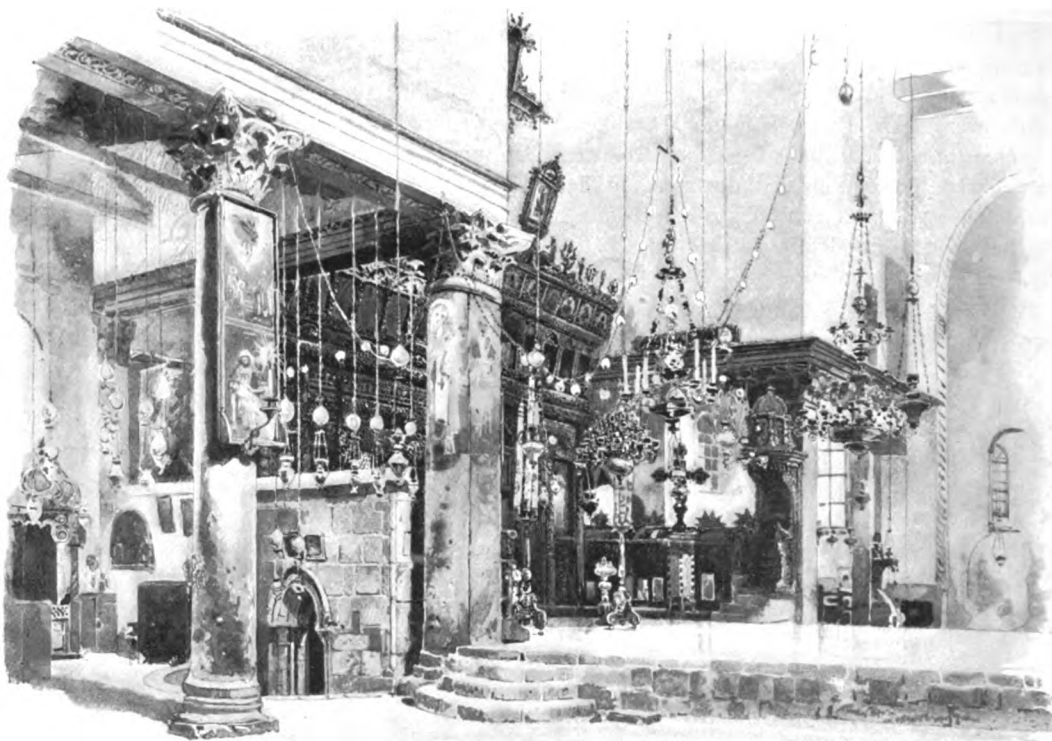
Because of the event the angels were heralding, men have built the great Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and, indeed, all the great Christian churches and cathedrals of the world. It is because of this that people from every country in Europe and America will join the throng of native Christians in the "City of the Nativity," and rejoice in memory of the angels'

song. It is because of this that there is to-day so much of "peace on earth" and "good-will toward men."

And now we return in time to see the procession of bishops, priests, and people that is forming in the square in front of the church. Each is dressed in his most gorgeous robes. Turkish soldiers line both sides of the street to keep the way open for the procession to pass. The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem has just arrived. The procession of priests, carrying banners and immense candles, meets him, then turns, and all go into the Latin chapel through the main entrance. Following, we are surprised to find the main entrance so small. It can admit but one at a time, and that one must stoop to enter. From the masonry it can be seen that the entrance was once much larger. The reason for the change was that the Mohammedans at one time did all in their power to injure and annoy the Christians, and even



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.



CHANCEL OF THE CHURCH, AND ENTRANCE TO THE GROTTA OF THE NATIVITY.

used to ride on horseback into the very church. The door therefore was made small to protect the church from this sacrilege.

Once inside, we see we are in a very ancient structure. Part of the masonry dates from the time of Constantine, who built a magnificent basilica on this site, about the year 330 of our era. All we can see of the oldest work, however, probably dates from not later than Justinian's time, about 550 A.D. In any case, the church is a venerable building, and it has witnessed some stirring scenes. In it Baldwin the Crusader was crowned king of Jerusalem. It has been repaired a number of times; and once, when it needed a new roof, King Edward IV. of England gave the lead to make one. This was about the year 1482. The lead roof did good service for about two hundred years, and might have lasted much longer had not the Moham-

medans melted it up to make bullets. However, another roof was soon provided.

Inside, the building consists of a nave and double aisles. The aisles are separated by two rows of columns made of red limestone. These columns have plain bases, and are surmounted by Corinthian capitals. They are nineteen feet high, and at the top of each a cross is engraved. The church is now owned by the Latin, Greek, and Armenian Christians.

Religious services will be held all night in the Latin chapel of St. Catherine. At midnight a solemn mass will be said by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The chapel is full of people, many of whom are sitting on the floor.

Before the procession descends into the Grotto of the Nativity we make our way there, so as to have a better view.

Originally it was simply a natural cave in

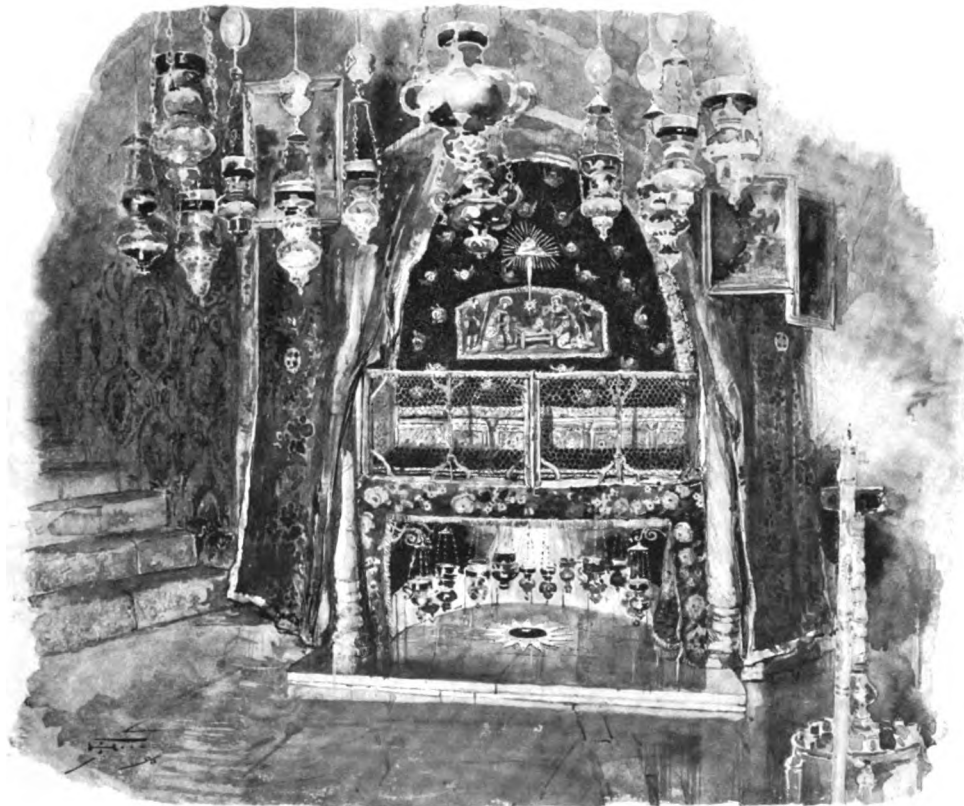
the limestone rock. Now little of the native rock is seen. Marble slabs cover the floor and line the walls. The ceiling, which is about ten feet high, is resplendent with thirty-two brass lamps. Their light enables us to examine the many pictures, portraying scenes in the life of Jesus, which the devotion of Christians has hung about the walls; but these pictures are generally very poor as specimens of art. At the east end of the cave there is a small recess in the rock before which hang fifteen lamps. In the floor of this recess a bright silver star is inlaid; it is nearly all worn away by the constant kissing it receives. Around the star is an inscription in Latin, which tells us that "Here, of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ was born."

Turning just a little to the right from this Place of the Star, and descending a few steps, we are in a small chamber called the Grotto of the Manger. The original manger is, of course, not here; it probably never was preserved, and

many stories about it are inventions of a much later date. Here, also, is a little altar on the place where the Wise Men from the East prostrated themselves before the infant Jesus. These three — the places of the birth, the manger, and the adoration — are all in what is called the Chapel of the Nativity.

Passing out of this Chapel by the steps leading into the Greek Church of St. Mary, we are again in the streets of Bethlehem.

It is a relief to get away from the glare of lamps, the smoke of candles, and the heavy odors of burning incense, and to breathe again the fresh air blowing over the Judean hills. The streets are very quiet, for all not in the church have retired to their homes. Occasionally people leave the church, and are driven away in their carriages to Jerusalem, though most will remain all night. We can wander through the streets and over the neighboring hills, for the clear moon makes it almost as bright as day.



IN THE CHAPEL OF THE NATIVITY.

How peaceful it all is! Indeed, it seems a most suitable place for the coming to the world of "the Prince of Peace."

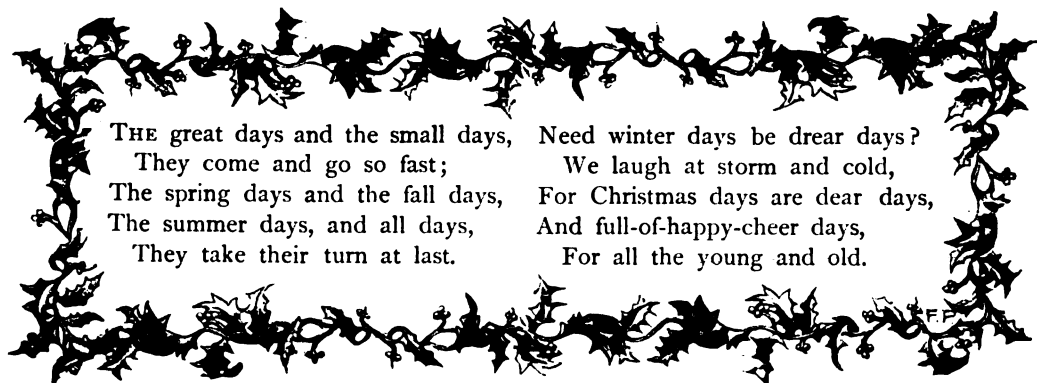
soon it is daybreak and we know that it is Christmas in Bethlehem.

But we miss much of the accustomed joy of the day. At home there would be good cheer, the companionship of loved ones, and the giving and receiving of gifts. Here there is little of this, the home life of the people is so different from ours. Christmas day in Bethlehem is not the Christmas day we know; it is full of religious ceremonies, and when these are over young and old go back to their accustomed life. The faces of the boys and girls I saw in Bethlehem last Christmas were not such faces as I should have seen in any city or village in America. And I knew the reason. It was because Christmas to them was much the same as any other day of the year. And so it requires more than Bethlehem to make Christmas what we like to have it. It requires loving home life and the presence of the spirit of the Christ Child in the heart.



THE GROTTO OF THE MANGER.

Faint streaks of the dawn are beginning to show in the sky above the hills of Moab. And yet, who would not be glad to spend one Christmas eve and day where He who made the glad day possible was born? Rapidly they grow longer and brighter, and



THE great days and the small days,  
They come and go so fast;  
The spring days and the fall days,  
The summer days, and all days,  
They take their turn at last.

Need winter days be drear days?  
We laugh at storm and cold,  
For Christmas days are dear days,  
And full-of-happy-cheer days,  
For all the young and old.





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BY FRANCES COLE BURR.

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MOST of the occupants of the small room sat gazing out of the windows into the snow-filled air. There were windows enough to go around, though the room was long and narrow, and contained six or eight persons. All day they had spent together in this one room, each sitting quietly in his place. There had been but little conversation. The tall dark man with the white mustache and tired face had slept much, with his head resting on his folded overcoat. A boy opposite, who showed sullen anger and defiance in every line of his young face, had watched him, and wondered how a man could sleep in the daytime. The boy did not know that those long, nervous white hands, wielding a surgeon's knife, had saved a life the day before, and the tired eyes had watched for many hours following. An earnest, bright-faced young girl near by had observed him, too, while he slept, as she eyed all her neighbors, with keen interest. There was the old lady in the corner, a man with sample-cases piled at his side, the shabby little woman holding a big baby, and a middle-aged man with stolid, joyless countenance, who had read three newspapers through from beginning to end without a change of expression, and since then had sat staring straight before him. The girl in her active mind had tried to combine these various personages into a story, but she gave it up with a little sigh for their commonplaceness.

An ill-assorted company it was. Surely they

would have chosen to spend the day before Christmas together for no other reason than, as it happened, they all wished to travel over this branch road, which ran between the northern line from Little Falls and the Grand Central.

The day was nearly over, and the journey should have been; but the snow, which had been falling steadily since morning, grew heavier, the speed of the train perceptibly decreased, and the engine groaned and labored. The engineer watched apprehensively as they drew near a certain cut, narrow and deep, through the hills. It was drifted high; and meeting that soft, still, resistless opposition, the great engine slowed and stopped.

The drifting snow hid the familiar landmarks, and so it happened that, just as the passengers were anxiously questioning one another as to the cause of the stop in that lonely place, Jim Case, the fireman, swinging himself off the engine, slipped over a culvert, and in the fall of only a few feet broke his arm with startling ease and completeness. He was lifted back, white and fainting; and, when the brisk conductor hurried into the passenger-coach, he responded to the anxious queries with a brief "Snowed up," and then, addressing the dark man, he said:

"I don't suppose you're a doctor, are you?"

"Yes," said the man, with an inquiring glance; "does some one need me?"

The conductor looked relieved.

"Now, ain't that luck!" said he. "Surgeon,



too, I guess?" The doctor nodded assent. In a few words the conductor told of the accident amid exclamations of mingled sympathy and dismay from the listeners. And as the doctor picked up his small black bag and followed him into the forward car, the conductor continued:

"Not many of you travel on this road, but I thought that was your trade when I took your ticket. I gave a job to a surgeon once when I was hurt in a wreck. That was a good while ago, but I have never forgot the look or the feel of his hand — so steady and strong and white," he added with an apologetic smile.

"Here we are, Jim!" he called out cheerily; "here is the doctor and the head nurse. You just break your bones and we will do the rest, you know."

The fireman lay stretched upon the floor, his head resting languidly on a pile of waste, and a pretty five-year-old boy sobbing with fright was kneeling close beside him.

"Who is this little fellow?" asked Dr. Carleton, after the examination was over, and he was skilfully bandaging the injured arm.

"He's mine, poor little chap!" said the fireman, with a tender glance, though his lips were white with pain. The boy, who was a sturdy little fellow just out of dresses, stopped his sobs as he heard his father's voice, and looking up at the doctor asked: "Now will we go to grandma's, and have a Christmas?"

The man winced again, and closed his eyes; and the conductor explained in a kindly aside:

"Little chap's mother is dead; just buried her a week ago. She had him filled up chock-full of Christmas, and seems as if he could n't give it up. They are going on to Jim's mother's.

She's going to take care of Jamie; and I guess the old lady had promised to have a tree."

Jamie was listening eagerly, and broke in, forgetting his shyness:

"Yes; a Christmas tree and candles. For grandma said so."

"Seems as if that is all he thinks of," said the fireman; "his poor mother — she —" and he stopped, and closed his eyes again.

"Shall we go now?" insisted Jamie. "You said that we'd get there the night before Christmas."

"Now, young fellow," broke in the conductor, "you know this is road

"JAMIE STOPPED CRYING, TO TASTE THE BROTH."  
(SEE PAGE 102.)

luck. You are a railroad man, and must learn to keep a stiff upper lip when things go wrong; brace up, and let that tree wait a day or so."

But Jamie's sobs broke out afresh. Fireman Jim's head turned languidly away.

"I should think some of those women might know what to do for the boy," said the conductor. The doctor nodded.

"Take him away, and have him amused if you can," said he. "He troubles his father. He



ought to have something to eat,"—the doctor hesitated, and then added,—“though I suppose it does no good to say so. Have you anything—any way of making a cup of tea, or any beef extract? Do you go prepared for these emergencies?”

The conductor shook his head.

“I’m afraid not,” he said, “unless some of the passengers might have something left from lunch. We were due at 5:30, you know, and we get our supper in town.”

“Well, you might inquire,” said the doctor; “he would feel better after having a bit of something.”

So the conductor, carrying the crying Jamie, went back to the passenger-car. He found the young girl the center of what seemed almost a social circle.

The good-natured baby, who had been drowsily nodding, was sound asleep in one of the farthest seats, as content as a veteran traveler in a Pullman state-room, while his mother sat shyly on the outskirts of the little company. The traveling man’s sample-cases, covered with a napkin, formed an improvised table; and upon this the stock of eatables was being spread.

“Well, anyhow, we sha’n’t be starved,” the old lady said; “that there basket”—pointing to a huge covered wicker—“is full of fixin’s I was taking to John’s folks. I expect it won’t seem so like Christmas to the children if they don’t have them leaf-cookies and the gingerbread animals; and they *are* good if I do say it that ought n’t; but I’m sure I never

thought, when I was bakin’ ’em, that they would save our lives.”

“We’ll hope they need not do quite so *much* for us,” laughed the pretty girl, whose name on the one modest trunk in the rear car was *D. M. Marsh*; “but we will not touch the children’s cookies unless we are starved into such robbery. How glad I am Aunt Mary made me take this great box of luncheon! I hardly made an impression on it this noon.” And she brought out an unopened jar of pressed chicken. “This will be our Christmas turkey!” she announced.

“Is n’t there some way of melting that down into soup?” asked the conductor, who came in just at this point.

“How is the injured man?” inquired the



CUTTING THE CHRISTMAS TREE FOR JAMIE.

commercial traveler, while the old lady held out her motherly arms for Jamie, as she said :

"You poor lamb! Is it his pa that 's killed?"  
 "He 's all right," said Conductor Brooks;  
 "only his arm is broken, and he is knocked  
 out and faint. The doctor was asking for some  
 soup, or something to brace him a little. If  
 that was chicken broth, now, it would just fit."

"Why, we can make broth in just a few min-  
 utes," said Miss Marsh; and in a moment she had  
 brought from her trunk a pretty chafing-dish,  
 and lighted it, the old lady nodding approval.

"Alcohol, too," the girl said, laughing; "left  
 over from the last oyster-spread at college."

The lamp was quickly adjusted, and into the  
 bright pan went part of the jellied chicken.

"It 's a privilege, nowadays, to see a young  
 girl know somethin' about cookin'!" said the  
 old lady, while the stolid-faced man silently  
 proffered a match; and Jamie stopped crying  
 to taste the broth, when an appetizing odor  
 began to diffuse through the car.

During all that had passed the boy had  
 hardly left his dark corner. He did not wish  
 to talk. It was nobody's business where he  
 was going, and some one would be sure to ask.  
 But he looked on, and thought how bright and  
 quick and pleasant the girl was. When the  
 broth was sent to Jim, and the doctor returned,  
 the remainder of Aunt Mary's bread and butter  
 and pickles was spread, with various additions  
 from the others' lunch-baskets. Part was re-  
 served for breakfast, and the little group whose  
 common misfortune had thawed all reserve  
 supped together merrily if not bountifully. The  
 boy declined all but a single sandwich. He  
 was hungry, but the angry, defiant pride which  
 had hardened his face all day melted somewhat,  
 and he felt less like eating.

"And to-morrow is Christmas!" said the trav-  
 eling man, whose name was Osgood. "I 've  
 worked like two men to get through and have  
 the day at home with the wife and babies, and  
 it is hard to be stalled up so near."

"And there 's my son John and Milly and  
 the children. I have n't missed a Christmas  
 with them since John was married. They all  
 come to me Thanksgivin'," said the old lady;  
 "but we 're all alive, and that 's a great mercy."

"Never mind," said Miss Marsh; "we 'll have  
 the evening at home. But I wish I had n't  
 stayed with Aunt Mary until the last moment."

"I want a Christmas!" sobbed Jamie, his  
 ready tears bursting forth again. "Mama said  
 I should have a Christmas; an' gramma 's got  
 a tree, an' I—want—a—Christmas!"

Again the big conductor told the short sad lit-  
 tle story of the dead mother who had promised  
 a happy day to the boy; and Miss Marsh looked  
 steadily out of the car window a half-minute,  
 while her eye brightened and a resolve formed.

"Jamie boy," said Miss Marsh, "you shall  
 have your Christmas. It 's Christmas here  
 just the same as all over the world; and you  
 shall have a real one."

He looked up in joyful trust. "An' a tree?"

"Yes, dear; a real tree," said the girl. The  
 others listened in astonishment. The old lady  
 opened her lips to remonstrate, but shut them  
 again. The traveling man whistled softly and  
 skeptically, and the doctor looked on amused.  
 Only Jamie and the boy gazed at her with im-  
 plicit confidence.

"When shall I have it?" asked Jamie.

"To-morrow—Christmas morning," said the  
 girl, brightly. "Now go to papa and go right  
 to sleep, and in the morning—you 'll see!"  
 With tears undried, but with a face beaming  
 with happiness, Jamie let himself be carried  
 away to his makeshift bed by his father's side.

"An' a tree," he said, as the sleepy eyes  
 closed; "an' candles, an'—"

"Well?" said Mr. Osgood, with a quizzical  
 smile of doubt. But before Miss Marsh could  
 reply the boy said briefly:

"I 'll get it. I saw 'em before it got dark."

He had already buttoned his coat, and seiz-  
 ing the red-handled ax that hung near the  
 stove, he bravely leaped out into the drifts.

"Those little evergreens, you know," said  
 Miss Marsh; "they are just a few feet away—  
 he can see them by the light from the windows,  
 I think; and we can make it pretty, somehow,"  
 she continued eagerly; "Jamie 's such a little  
 lad, and Christmas means so much to him."

Mr. Osgood nodded.

"But what 's goin' to be on the tree?" asked  
 the practical old lady. "It 's all foolishness  
 goin' to so much trouble for that one child, and  
 we a-tremblin', you may say, between life and  
 death! But I declare for 't, I hate to have the

day go by and do nothin'; and even if we 're rescued to-morrow, as that conductor says he thinks probable,—which I don't more 'n half believe—what with gettin' home, and explainin' when you *do* get there,—which please mercy we may!—why, the day 's as good as gone. An', anyhow, I 've got a pair of red knit mittens for John's Alexander, and I 'm going to give 'em to that poor motherless lamb, an' you can hang 'em on the tree for one thing, Miss Marsh."

"Splendid!" said Miss Marsh. "And I have a red skating-cap in my satchel—I believe it will just fit him."

"Is he too small for a knife?" asked Mr. Osgood. "Let 's see—about five, is n't he? My wife makes six the knife-line; I guess I 'd better not," and he returned it to his pocket.

"Hold on!" said he, with sudden inspiration. "I 've some illustrated catalogues here that could pass for picture-books—yes, and cards too—our new ones"; and, diving into his cases, he brought out a pile of brilliant pictures.

"Will Miss Santa Claus accept this?" asked Dr. Carleton, offering a pocket microscope. Just then the door opened, and the boy came in, dragging triumphantly a small evergreen.

Every one laughed excitedly, and it "did begin to seem somethin' like," as the old lady said. Then how they worked! The tree was braced firmly at the end of the aisle, the lumps of ice and snow shaken off, and a more durable quality of soft cotton flakes from Dr. Carleton's surgical stores added. Leaf-cookies and astonishing gingerbread animals dangled from the branches, and Alexander's red mittens waved in welcome. Even the man of the immovable visage helped, with something like a softening of his hard features; and when he fastened to a branch a red blank-book and pocket pencil, there was an outburst of laughing applause.

Meanwhile Dr. Carleton talked quietly with the shabby little woman; he had asked about the baby's teething, and she unconsciously gave him much of her simple story. Her husband had lost his place in the little town where they had lived. He had found work in the city, and she was going to meet him. They had no "folks." She worked in a factory before she was married. No; the baby had n't cut any teeth yet. She hoped she would n't fuss or be sick

about it. She did n't know much about babies. The doctor listened with sympathy, and, a little later, wrapping a bright goldpiece in a bit of paper, he marked it, "For Baby Burns to cut her teeth on," and it was added to the tree.

The boy looked on with a dull ache in his throat. He hoped it was not going to be sore. How sick he had been with those bad throats, and how good mother always was! Mother was filling the children's stockings at home now. She always managed to have something for them, somehow. Poor mother! She would have it all to bear alone now. How could he leave her? Why did n't he think of her part? "But I won't go back," he said to himself. "I *can't* go back now. I 'll come home rich some day, and give mother everything she wants; but I won't sneak back now." Then he did n't care to think more.

"I can make a top," he whispered to Miss Marsh, "if I have a piece of wood. Shall I?"

"He would like it best of all, I know," said Miss Marsh heartily; and then she added aloud, "Now we must have a star for the top. What can we do about it?"

"Well, I guess it's good enough," said the old lady. "I guess he won't miss the star."

But the girl looked from one to another in perplexed appeal.

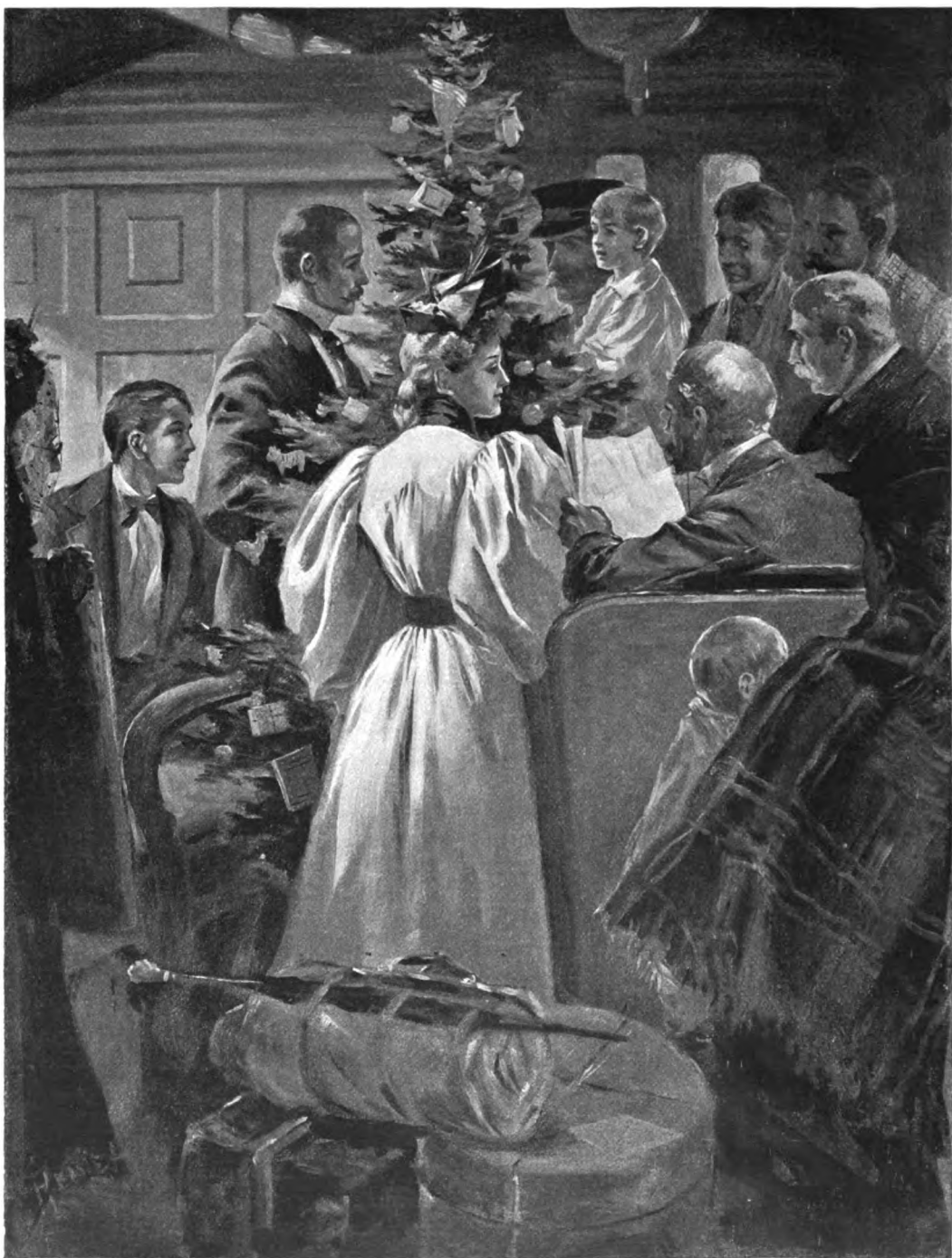
"Why must there be a star?" asked the boy shyly.

Miss Marsh hesitated a moment. She did not know much about boys, this brotherless college girl; but she said, almost as shyly as he:

"Don't you think the Christmas star is the most beautiful thing in the world? You know the Christ Child was born beneath a star; and I think it meant, for one thing, that for every new life there is a star set in heaven that will light the life all the way, if once we catch a glimpse of it, and know it is there for us."

The boy listened breathless. He could not have told just what the girl's words meant; but the moral courage that all day had been struggling to live took new strength, and slowly began to shape itself into a resolution. They stood looking at each other, when the traveling man, who was down again in his cases, emerged in triumph, waving some tinfoil.

"Cut out the star from that pasteboard box,"



THE CHRISTMAS TREE IN THE CAR.—“THEN THEY ALL FILED IN, JAMIE IN CONDUCTOR BROOKS’S ARMS.” (SEE PAGE 105.)

he cried; “and here ’s the glory for it. We can’t stop short of perfection in this tree.”

staring at the sight, when he came in a little later. “Where do you folks think you are?

“Well, I ’m blessed!” said Conductor Brooks, At a Sunday-school festival?”

"Never you mind where we be!" said the old lady. Her bonnet was awry, and her spectacles on her forehead. "You just help h'ist up that star, and then we 're all done."

Christmas morning, Jamie woke round-eyed and expectant.

"I want my tree," he said; "and I want my breakfast." And as the waiting holiday-makers were impatient as he, the breakfast was hurried through, and then they all filed in, Jamie in Conductor Brooks's arms, his father, who was doing bravely, coming behind, followed by the engineer. Jamie gazed at the tree as if dazed by his surprise; but after the first moment, a smile of radiant, ecstatic joy spread over the round, baby face. Not a word or sound—only that beaming, blissful smile. It was irresistible; and with shouts of laughter the tree was despoiled of its offerings, and Jamie's cup of happiness was full. In the midst of the merriment Miss Marsh glanced at the boy. He was gazing at the star with a curious expression, and she thought of their words the night before. In her bodice was thrust a pin whose head was a tiny golden star—the badge of her class society. She drew it out, and pressing it into one of the leaf-cookies which were being passed about, she handed it to him with a whispered "Merry Christmas!" He saw it, and there was a quick rush of color to his face, and tears to his eyes—and that little star weighed down the balance of decision on the right side, and made a man of him. But the girl never knew.

When the laughing talk had quieted a little, Jamie turned confidently to Miss Marsh.

"Now the story," he said.

"What story, laddie?" she asked.

"The Christmas story. Mama said there is a Christmas story, and she saved it up for Christmas day. It is the nicest story I ever heard, mama said."

Every one was still for a moment. Poor Jim turned away. "She would have made a good man of him," was the thought in his heart. The girl felt her own heart beat quickly. Could she? Before all these strange people? What

would they think! No, she could n't; she would have a chance to talk to Jamie alone before the day was over. That would be much better. But the childish eyes gazed expectantly into hers, and with a swift thought of the dead mother she lifted the little boy gently to her knee, and with softly flushing cheeks, and voice that trembled a little, she began:

"Long ago, in a beautiful country over the sea, there were shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night."

The sweet voice grew stronger as the simple words of the wonderful story held the listeners in solemn silence. The little woman's tears dropped on her baby's head as she heard of the mother for whom there was no room in the inn, and a vague, trembling prayer went up from her burdened heart to the Christ who was a child.

The boy's eyes shone with new light as he thought of the star set in heaven for the Christ who was a boy, and with a thrill of newly awakened love and appreciation he placed his own weary, hard-worked mother on her throne in her boy's heart.

There were eloquent sermons preached in the churches that Christmas day, and wonderful music was sung; but, as truly as in his visible temples, Christ was preached and worshiped about that little tree, whose balsam breath went up as frankincense and myrrh.

A little later in the day, after the relief had come and the train pulled into the city station, the Christmas party stopped a moment for the last handshakings and farewells. Twenty-four hours before they would have parted with scarcely a glance at one another. Now they seemed old friends. The busy doctor hurried away first, followed by a long, grateful look from the baby's mother.

"I'll never forget it of him," she thought.

The boy took a step toward Miss Marsh. One of her hands was tight in Jamie's chubby clasp, the other was held in the old lady's.

He looked a moment, then turned with a resolute face, and walked to the ticket-office.

"Give me a ticket on the first train that goes back to Little Falls," he said.